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050855Z Aug 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DS-00	EB-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	NSAE-00	OIC-00	PA-00
	PER-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	FMP-00	R-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00
	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W		

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2326
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS GABORONE 001092

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR MUNCY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [BC](#) [SADC](#)
SUBJECT: BOTSWANA CSOs CONDEMN MUGABE'S ABUSES

1. SUMMARY: Civil society organizations in Botswana are looking for ways to support the struggle against despotism in Zimbabwe. At a half-day workshop on human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, representatives of churches, political parties and NGOs condemned the Mugabe regime's atrocities and asked a panel of human rights activists from Zimbabwe how they could assist in that struggle. Mission will encourage both the GOB and Botswana civil society to use the platform provided by the August 17-18 SADC Summit to address the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe. END SUMMARY

2. The Botswana Center for Human Rights, also known as Ditshwanelo, hosted a half-day workshop on human rights abuses in Zimbabwe on August 4. A panel of Zimbabweans including human rights lawyer Ms. Beatrice Mtetwa; Bishop Trevor Manhanga; and Mrs. Jennifer Williams of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) addressed the audience. They described the Mugabe regime's disregard for the rule of law, the catastrophic impact of Operation Restore Order upon Zimbabwe's urban poor, and the systematic persecution of those who demand the right to assemble and speak freely.

3. Following the panel's presentation, Zimbabwe's Ambassador to Botswana rose to implore the attendees not to believe the panelists alleged "lies." Mr. Gobe Matenge, a wealthy supporter of the Botswana Congress Party, censured the Ambassador for attempting to "intimidate" the panel and expressed fear for what would happen to them when they returned to Zimbabwe. Joyce Anderson, Director of Emang Basadi, the leading women's rights NGO in Botswana, demanded thrice that the Ambassador apologize to the assembly and also wondered aloud whether the panelists would return to their homes safely.

4. Aside from denouncing the Ambassador's flimsy defense of the GOZ's policies and practices, several participants asked the panelists what they could do to support demands fundamental change in Zimbabwe. Mr. Modise Maphanyane, Director of the Botswana chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, insisted that the seminar not end in talk but lead to some kind of constructive action. Representatives of two different religious organizations echoed this desire to assist those demanding that the GOZ respect their human rights.

5. Noting that Gaborone would host the SADC Summit later this month, they again asked what could be done to help. Prince Dibeela, a priest at the Botswana synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, noted that President Mogae and President Mbeki had "failed us" by consistently refusing to acknowledge abuses in Zimbabwe and by pursuing "silent diplomacy." He opined that civil society needed to bring pressure upon them to insist upon respect for democracy and human rights. Ditshwanelo plans to prepare a report based on the workshop for distribution at the SADC Summit and as contribution to deliberations by regional NGOs who will meet in Gaborone shortly before the Summit.

6. COMMENT: Post will continue to advocate a more constructive approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe by encouraging the GOB and civil society to use the August 17-18 SADC Summit in Gaborone as a platform to demand that the GOZ respect for the principles of democracy and human rights.

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